



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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34 arrested in ICE-led multi-agency operation targeting street gang members

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. — U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents here, in partnership with local, state and federal law enforcement officers, arrested 34 aliens with ties to violent street gangs during a weeklong operation that ended Monday.



These are the latest arrests under an ongoing national ICE initiative called “Operation Community Shield,” in which ICE partners with other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to address the public safety threat posed by transnational street gangs. Such law enforcement partnerships are essential to the success of the initiative and help ensure officer safety during the operations.

The multi-agency operation targeted foreign national gang members and gang associates in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, and also included arrests in Albany, Willmar and Worthington, Minn. All 34 arrested this week were targeted for their affiliations with violent street gangs such as Sureño-13, Vatos Locos, Rough Tough Somali Crips, and the Mexican Mafia, among others. Five of those apprehended were arrested on state criminal charges. Thirty of those arrested are illegal aliens and four are U.S. permanent residents whose previous criminal convictions render them eligible for deportation.

Nine of the illegal aliens have been presented to the U.S. Attorney’s Office for federal prosecution for re-entering the United States after having already been deported, which is a felony punishable by up to 20 years in prison. ICE will process the remainder for deportation.

In addition to the 34 arrested, ICE located three additional gang members who are currently in the custody of other law enforcement agencies. When they complete their sentences, they will be turned over to ICE and placed into removal proceedings.

The gang members arrested during this local operation have a variety of criminal convictions, including: criminal sexual conduct, assault with a dangerous weapon, robbery, various drug crimes, burglary, drunken driving, and firearms violations. Agents also seized five firearms during the operation.

Those arrested during this operation are from Mexico, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Somalia.

“Street gangs pose a growing public safety threat to communities throughout this area,” said Claude Arnold, special agent in charge for the ICE Office of Investigations in Bloomington. “We will not tolerate violent gang activity in our cities, and will use all of our law enforcement tools to thwart criminal efforts of gangs. Operation Community Shield shows how ICE works with our law enforcement partners to dismantle these criminal organizations and help protect our communities.”

The gang operation, which began Sept. 17 and ended Monday, was conducted by ICE in partnership with the Department of State’s Diplomatic Security Service; the FBI; the Drug Enforcement Administration; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension; and the Metro Gang Strike Force.

“The Metro Gang Strike Force was tasked by the Minnesota legislature to address and document gang activity wherever it appears. This often means partnering up with local, state or federal agencies in joint anti-gang operations,” said Jim Heimerl, assistant commander for the Metro Gang Strike Force. “Operations of this type are important because they allow us to track gang movement and reduce criminal activity. Our goal is to combat gangs and keep them from getting a foothold in new areas.”

Nationally, ICE agents have arrested more than 6,500 members from more than 500 different gangs under Operation Community Shield. In Minnesota, ICE agents have made more than 100 arrests since the Operation Community Shield was established in February 2005.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.